

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF POTOHUNK RIVER,  
NORTH CAROLINA.

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

*With letter of the Chief of Engineers, report of a preliminary examination  
of Potohunk River, North Carolina.*

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JANUARY 25, 1893.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to  
be printed.

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington, January 24, 1893.*

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith a letter from the Chief of Engineers dated January 23, 1893, together with a copy of a report from Maj. W. S. Stanton, Corps of Engineers, dated January 17, 1893, of a preliminary examination made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act of July 13, 1892, of Potohunk River, North Carolina.

Very respectfully,

S. B. ELKINS,  
*Secretary of War.*

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,  
UNITED STATES ARMY,  
*Washington, D. C., January 23, 1893.*

SIR: I have the honor to submit the accompanying copy of report, dated January 17, 1893, upon preliminary examination of Potohunk River, North Carolina, made by Maj. W. S. Stanton, Corps of Engineers, in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act approved July 13, 1892.

It is the opinion of Maj. Stanton and the division engineer, concurred in by this office, that this river is not worthy of improvement by the General Government.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOS. LINCOLN CASEY,  
*Brigadier-General, Chief of Engineers.*

Hon. S. B. ELKINS,  
*Secretary of War.*

#### PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF POTOHUNK RIVER, NORTH CAROLINA.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,  
*Wilmington, N. C., January 17, 1893.*

GENERAL: I have the honor to submit the following report of a preliminary examination of the Potohunk River, North Carolina, made by me in person in compliance with a requirement of the river and harbor act of July 13, and with your letter of July 14, 1892.

The Potohunk flows into the Pasquotank River from its left or easterly bank, about 8 miles from Elizabeth City, which is above, on the other bank. When examined its depth in the pool at its mouth just above the sand flats was 4 feet, whence 3 feet could be carried about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles to "Shipyard Landing," except at two short shoals about midway, on which the depth was 2 and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet respectively. From "Shipyard Landing," about 3,000 feet to the wagon bridge opposite, and about one-quarter mile from the little village of Shiloh, only 2 feet could be carried. Its width is 20 feet at its mouth, nowhere exceeds 60 feet, and averages about 40 feet. Its banks are low, flat, swampy, and more or less timbered, and its bed soft mud. It has little current, is not affected by lunar tides, but occasionally, when easterly winds drive the water into the Pasquotank from Albemarle Sound, its depth is about 3 feet greater than when examined, and it then overflows its banks to the depth of about 2 feet. Immediately above Shiloh it divides into several branches.

At the Potohunk the Pasquotank is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide, with broad sand flats and very shallow water between its channel and banks. From the 6-foot contour the distance across the sand flats to the mouth of the Potohunk is not less than 1,400 feet and the water is not more than a foot deep for a fourth of the way.

About 1 mile above the Potohunk there is a long wharf built on piles over the sand flats from the left bank of the Pasquotank, at which vessels plying between Elizabeth City and Norfolk, via the lower Pasquotank, Albemarle Sound, and the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal, touch to deliver merchandise for Shiloh and vicinity and receive the products of that section. The expense of maintaining this wharf makes the wharfage charges high, and landings at it in unfavorable winds are exposed and difficult, owing to the width and straight course of the Pasquotank for 7 miles above and about 6 miles below to the sound.

Four steamers, the *Lizzie Burrus*, *Tahoma*, *William B. Rogers*, and *Thomas Newton*, of 105.3, 80.76, 63.31, and 39.56 tons net tonnage, respectively, in plying on the Pasquotank or between Elizabeth City and Norfolk, touch at the wharf with a frequency, it is reported, amounting to about one landing daily, and sailing vessels also touch there occasionally.

The two larger of the foregoing steamers are reported to have landed at and received from the wharf about 400 tons of freight, all told, during the past year. The schooner *Ocoke*, of Plymouth, N. C., 26 tons' register, is also reported to have taken from the wharf during the same period 20,000 bushels of corn in eleven cargoes.

The improvement desired by those who are interested in the commerce of the locality is primarily the dredging of a channel 6 feet deep and 1,400 feet, or more, in length from the 6-foot contour in the Pasquotank to the 4-foot pool just within the mouth of the Potohunk, including the deepening of that pool to 6 feet to enable vessels to make at all times easy and secure landings in the Potohunk and avoid the expense of maintaining the long wharf which has become too much decayed to receive heavy freight, horses, or cattle. This cut would, doubtless, also be of some utility in giving small fishing vessels access to the Potohunk for shelter bound to or from Elizabeth City, the shipping point for their cargoes, but which, however, very seldom meet with disaster in the Pasquotank River.

The improvement sought embraces secondarily the deepening of the Potohunk 1.9 miles to Shiloh to save about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles of wagon transportation to the Pasquotank River.

Several citizens desiring this improvement report that were it made the Potohunk would be the shipping point for very nearly 18,000 acres of arable land, possessed by 190 land holders, divided as to crops somewhat as follows: 12,000 acres, producing annually 200,000 bushels of corn; 3,000 acres, yielding about 1,800 bales of cotton, and 3,000 acres "producing probably not less than \$25,000 worth of truck."

The Potohunk is in the county of Camden, which has an area of 280 square miles. By the report of the United States Census of 1890 it then had a population of 5,667, and 6,274 in 1880, decreasing in the ten years 9.67 per cent. By the same report it produced in 1889, 244,353 bushels of corn on 22,634 acres, 9,585 bushels of oats on 1,157 acres, 204 bushels of wheat on 30 acres, and 1,240 bales of cotton on 4,155 acres, the number of acres tilled for these crops aggregating 27,976.

The southerly part of this county, between a third and a half of it, is a peninsula extending from Albemarle Sound on the south northerly between the Pasquotank on the west and North River, a part of the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal route on the east. (See U. S. Coast Survey Chart No. 10, edition of 1887, scale  $\frac{1}{400,000}$ .) The peninsula is only 7 miles wide at the Potohunk River and about 19 miles north from its narrow southern extremity is crossed by the Norfolk and Southern Railroad, about 37 miles from Norfolk.

Shiloh township has 1,773 inhabitants, somewhat the smallest of the three townships in the county and decreased 81 between 1880 and 1890. Shiloh has 110 inhabitants and is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east from the Pasquotank, about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles west from North River, about 8 miles north from Albemarle Sound, and about 8 miles south from the railroad, by which it is said products requiring quick transit are shipped to Norfolk.

The benefits of the desired improvement would be restricted almost wholly to the very limited territory circumscribed by the two rivers, the sound, and the railroad.

Near the Potohunk the left bank of the Pasquotank, while in places low and swampy, is in others for considerable distances 5 to 6 feet high and of sandy soil. At these latter places the banks are vertical, are being undermined, and are caving under the action of the waves in this broad and straight reach of the river, the sand from them being deposited on the flats through which, were the Potohunk to be improved,

the cut to its mouth would be dredged. A cut dredged through these sand flats would be crossed by the waves and currents caused by the winds up and down the Pasquotank, and I see no reason to believe that it could be maintained without repeated redredging.

Considering the very restricted and sparsely populated territory, small number of people, and consequent commerce that would be benefited and the comparatively considerable cost of making and maintaining the improvement, in my opinion the Potohunk River is not worthy of improvement by the General Government.

Respectfully submitted,

W. S. STANTON,  
*Major, Corps of Engineers.*

Brig. Gen. THOMAS L. CASEY,  
*Chief of Engineers U. S. A.*

(Through Col. Wm. P. Craighill, Corps of Engineers, Division Engineer, Southeast Division.)

[First indorsement.]

U. S. ENGINEER OFFICE,  
*Baltimore, Md., January 19, 1893.*

Respectfully submitted to the Chief of Engineers.

For the facts and reasons stated in the report of the local engineer, it is my opinion this stream is not worthy of improvement by the General Government.

WM. P. CRAIGHILL,  
*Colonel, Corps of Engineers.*

